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A FOREWORD ON THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE CREEK INDIANS¹

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RECENT investigations by the writer among the Indians of the Creek Confederacy have brought to light certain facts regarding the social organization of that group of tribes which should be at the disposal of all students of primitive society. In this article will be given some of the more important of these, although it should be understood that the investigations are by no means complete.

The so-called "Creek Confederacy" was built up of several tribes speaking the Muskogee or Creek language proper and at least as many others with different languages, all, however, with the exception of one or two recent additions, being languages of the same stock.² Each principal town or tribe was called *talwa* by the Muskogee, and *okla* by the Hitchiti-speaking people. It is also said, though I have not examined this matter thoroughly, that each town formerly possessed a distinctive town badge or totem; alligator for Tukaba'tci, eagle for Kowita, snake for Atasi, garfish for

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² As original Muskogee tribes may be named the Abi'ka, the Cosa, the combined Kasi'ta and Kowita, the Oktcai, the Tukaba'tci, and perhaps the Wokokai, Eufaula, and Hilibi. The principal non-Muskogee tribes were the Alibamu, Koasati, Tuskegee, Chiaha, Osotchi, Atsík hata,—the last including all of the Hitchiti-speaking people,—and more recently the Natchez, Yuchi, and part of the Shawnee. There is some reason for doubting the original connection of the Tukaba'tci and Oktcai with the Muskogee proper.

Koasati, etc. All but the last of these badges named also occur as clan totems.

Irrespective of the languages spoken by them, all of the towns formed two great divisions, or "fires," and towns of each fire called one another "friends," those of the opposite fire "opponents," or "opposites." This distinction came out most clearly in the great ball games, which partook somewhat of the character of wars, and were always between towns of opposite fires.

These two fires have been called "white" and "red" on the supposition that they were concerned with war and peace, respectively, and such was probably the case, but the color terms were used by only two Indians so far as I remember. Four particular towns are supposed to have had a kind of precedence, namely, Kowita and Tukaba'tci for the red towns, and Kasi'ta and Abi'ka for the white towns. Nevertheless, in the matter of absolute headship the white towns are ignored and one is told that either Tukaba'tci or Kowita was the head of all. As a matter of fact these were the leading towns among the Upper and Lower Creeks respectively. Of the two, Tukaba'tci appears to have had greater eminence, the population of the Upper Creeks having been greater and that of Tukaba'tci itself down to the present day the greatest in the confederacy. Independently of this theoretical scheme of things, Hickory Ground has a certain prestige, being called the "mother town" of the Okfaskis and Tulsas, but this may be due partly to the fact that it was Alexander McGillivray's town and more recently that of "Crazy Snake." In spite of its prominence there is some reason to think that Tukaba'tci was not originally a Muskogee town.

The question of town relationship is somewhat complicated with that of clan relationship which I will now describe. I have obtained the names of twenty-seven clans among the Creeks proper and the Seminole, but two of these rest on information furnished by only one or two informants and may be ignored. The others are: Wind, Skunk, Fish, Rabbit, Bear, Wolf, Bird, Eagle, Beaver, Panther, Wildcat, Potato, Raccoon, Oktayatçalgi, Fox, Alligator, Tamałgi, Turkey, Deer, Mole, Toad, Pahosałgi, Otter, Snake, and Kapitsałgi.

In many tribes a simple list of clans like this has been reported, leaving one the impression that they are all of equal value; but such is far from true, at least for the Creeks. In the first place the Skunk, Fish, and Rabbit are always given as parts of the Wind clan, the Wolf as part of the Bear, the Wildcat as part of the Panther, and the Mole and Toad as parts of the Deer. About the Eagle clan opinion differs, some for obvious reasons classifying it as a section of the Bird, others saying that it is a part of the Raccoon, because the Raccoon and related clans are entitled to carry eagle-feathers in the Feather dance, while the Bird clan carries white-crane feathers. This latter statement is undoubtedly true for some towns, whether the former is or not. Again, one is usually told that the Beaver and Bird clans are "almost the same thing." Another group is composed of the Raccoon, Potato, and Fox. In some places, especially among the Lower Creeks, the Potato seems to be the principal clan of this group; in others the Raccoon. The Raccoon is prominent because it is the leading clan of Tukaba'tci. Sometimes the Oktayatçalgi¹ are added to the last group, sometimes not. Still another group consists of the Alligator, Tamałgi,² and Turkey, which in turn are occasionally made parts of the same group as the Raccoon, Potato, and Oktayatçalgi. The Pahosałgi are classed usually with the Deer, and the Kapitsałgi³ and Snake with the Alligator. The Otter appear to belong with the Alligator also. This relationship generally involves prohibition of intermarriage also, a prohibition which held in nearly all towns for the Wind, Skunk, Fish, and Rabbit; the Bear and Wolf; the Bird and Beaver; the Panther and Wildcat; the Alligator, Tamałgi, and Turkey; the Deer, Mole, and Toad; and the Raccoon, Potato, and Fox. But the intermarrying clan groups varied also from town to town. In some the Oktayatçalgi could not marry in the Raccoon, Potato, and Fox. In some the Alligator, Tamałgi, and Turkey could not marry these clans either. In one case the Wind and Bear could not intermarry, in another the Wind and Bird, etc., and I am

¹ This may contain the word for "sand," *oktaha*.

² It is possible that this clan is descended from an old town or tribe.

³ Said to mean "Ashes people."

informed that in the Koasati towns there were but two exogamous groups corresponding to divisions (Hathagalgi and Tciloqogalgi) which I am about to explain. These town differences, however, do not seem to have held if marriage was contracted outside of the town, and within the town it appears to have been due to an interesting social custom, in accordance with which a certain number of clans in each town formed, or rather held, councils together. Thus, if there were but few of one clan in a given town, the representatives of that clan would join another, and they were especially likely to join some clan that had a good speaker. The children of the members of all the clans forming a council would then be brought up and instructed together, and marriage was forbidden between them. Marriage within the clan was absolutely prohibited, although I was told by one informant that it was permitted between persons of the same clan not belonging to towns known to be related. Thus, according to him, a man of the Wind clan of Kowita could not marry a woman of the Wind clan of Broken Arrow, a branch of Kowita, but might marry one of the Kasi'ta Wind people, etc. This was denied by everybody else. We have facts regarding exogamy pointing in two different directions. It is asserted positively, and is certainly partly true, that in late times the older prohibitions of marriage between some clans have been broken down. For instance, in Hilibi, a slip having occurred between an Alligator man and a Turkey woman, it was concluded to overlook the offence and to consider the clans kindred *only in the daytime*. Other clans broke completely apart, the expression in this case being that "their fire was put out." On the other hand, an old and very intelligent Kealêdji Indian positively declared that anciently clans were not exogamous, but that at one time a council was held at which it was determined they should be made so. The story has small value as history, but the fact that such an origin for clan exogamy is considered possible is important, and it must be taken in connection with the further fact that marriage was also prohibited between near relatives belonging to clans that could ordinarily intermarry freely. In connection with the other data brought forward, this demonstrates that, among the Creeks

at least, clans and exogamous groups have no necessary connection with one another. No clans in early historic times were endogamous, and that is all the significance that clans possessed in marriage relations.

Another matter of considerable importance now has to be taken into consideration. In addition to a dual division among the towns, there is a dual division of clans. One is called Hathagalgi, or "Whites," and embraces generally the Wind, Bear, Bird, Beaver, and their subdivisions. I know of no case in which the Wind and Bear are anything else, but among the Alibamu and Hitchiti the Bird and Beaver belong on the other side, while the Panther people are Whites in Tukaba'tci and some other towns, and the Alligator are Whites in Paḵan-talahāsi and several more. For obvious reasons white men adopted into the tribe were usually placed in one of the white clans, most often the Wind. The other division of the clans is usually called Tciloqoga'łgi, "People of a different speech." It embraces the Raccoon, and the allied Potato and Fox, the Oktayatḷgi, the Deer, and usually the Alligator and Panther. As already stated, the Bird and Beaver in one or two towns also belong to this side. It includes, too, the Snake and Kapitsalgi. The symbolism of the Creeks would lead us at once to suspect that these white clans are in some way connected with the white towns and the Tciloqoga'łgi clans with the red towns. This is probably a fact, but it is not so consistently shown as would be expected. Thus the chiefs of most white towns are from white clans, but Weogūfki and Paḵan-talahāsi have Oktayatḷgi chiefs, while, on the other hand, Kowita has a Wind chief and Łaplaḷaḷa a Bear chief, as have some of the other red towns. In practice games the Hathagalgi and Tciloqoga'łgi were always opposed.

On studying the clans from which the various chiefs are drawn we find that certain clans are much more prominent than others. Thus, far more towns take their chief from the Bear than from any other single clan. Second on the white side is the Bird. Among the Tciloqoga clans the most prominent is the Raccoon, the "royal" clan of Tukaba'tci and said to have been anciently the leading Hitchiti clan, and the Oktayatḷgi, leaders in Eufaula, Weogūfki,

Paḡan-talahāsi, and one or two other places. Next in importance to the clan of the *mî'kalgi*, or "chiefs," is that of the *hêniḡalgi*,¹ or "second men." At the time of the busk the second men are constant companions of the *mî'kalgi*. Every person of the chief's clan and every person sent to do an errand of any consequence must be accompanied by one of these *hêniḡalgi*. At Tukaba'tci the Wind people are the *hêniḡalgi*, and the Tukaba'tci affirm that this clan was once the *hêniḡalgi* in all towns. Moreover, their opinion is confirmed by a considerable body of evidence and by the fact that they are still the *hêniḡalgi* in by far the largest number of towns. Next to the Wind, the Bird and Deer seem to be favorites as *hêniḡalgi*. It is noteworthy that the Panther clan is rarely either the chief's clan or that of the *hêniḡalgi*, while the Deer seldom appear in the former capacity. In some towns, notably Tukaba'tci, the Deer is considered a "choice" clan, a regard which appears to have something to do with the importance of deer in the old Creek food supply.

The social organization of the Creeks is thus shown to be complicated, indicating a considerable period of development. We see clearly that it has resulted from a combination of a number of tribes speaking Muskogee with others employing different languages, mainly those of the same stock. The dual division of towns seems not to be due in this case to a union of distinct tribes, because the non-Muskogee tribes are found on both sides, and there is a strong tradition that Kowita and Kasi'ta, now in opposite fires, separated from one original Muskogee tribe. An attempt to correlate the dual division of clans with the dual division of towns is not altogether satisfactory. Still the white clans are certainly associated by some Creeks with the white towns and the Tciloqoga clans with the red towns. The regulations regarding exogamy and endogamy show clearly that there is no necessary connection between these and the clans. Their Westermarckian character will be noticed, but it should be remembered that the exogamic laws, instead of being based on a natural disinclination to mate on the part of children reared together, are due to a *disinclination to have them mate* on the part of their elders.

¹ This word, along with another title, *hola'ta*, not mentioned in this paper, is found in Timucua, the ancient language of Florida, and is probably derived from it.

In such a study as this it is interesting to compare the clans and towns and to see whether there is any tendency for certain clans to appear in some towns rather than in others. This investigation is by no means complete, but a few facts may be stated. The Wind, Bear, and Bird seem pretty generally distributed, but the Beaver, as distinct from the Bird, is characteristic of the Tulsa towns, including "Hickory Ground." The Fish seems to be a Lower Creek clan, and the Snake, Kapitsalgi, and Pahosalgi are found only in Hitchiti and Seminole towns. The Mole and Toad are almost entirely confined to Hitchiti and Tālwa ḷa'qo. The Potato is more conspicuous among the Lower Creeks, and the Raccoon among the Upper Creeks. The Eagle also seems to be characteristic of Upper Creek towns, particularly Tukaba'tci.

A noteworthy fact brought out by this investigation is the tendency on the part of the people concerned to invent an explanation for an association which exists between two or more clans, and the existence of such association without any apparent reason. Thus, if an Indian not acquainted with the Turkey clan is asked about its affinities, he says at once that it must be with the Bird clan, when, in fact, it is with the Alligator, and no reason has ever been offered for this association. In the same way it is asserted that the Beaver and the Alligator should go together because both are water animals, but actually the Beaver is associated with the Bird. In the same inexplicable way the Toad and Mole are associated with the Deer. The word *pahosa* is said to sound as if it referred to the wolf, yet the Pahosalgi clan is connected with the Deer. Evidently most relationships were due to causes other than any relationship between the names of the animals borne by the clans in question, although, as in the case of the Panther and Wildcat, Bear and Wolf, Wind and Skunk, there were exceptions.